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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 HANOI 000882

SIPDIS

STATE FOR OES MARSHA GOLDBERG  
STATE PASS TO AID/ANE TIM RESCH, PATRICIA CHAPLIN  
STATE PASS TO NOAA/OIA JONATHAN JUSTI  
BANGKOK FOR ECON JIM WALLER  
BANGKOK FOR AID/RDMA TIM BEANS, WINSTON BOWMAN

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: SENV KSCA EAID TBIO VM

SUBJECT: VIETNAM: USAID AND NOAA SUPPORT FOR OIL SPILL  
RESPONSE PLANNING IN SAIGON RIVER ESTUARY

REF: A) HANOI 766 B) HANOI 515 C) HANOI 820

¶11. Summary. USAID's U.S.-Asia Environmental Partnership (US-AEP) and the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Office of Response and Restoration have supported the project "Improved Oil Spill Contingency Planning in Saigon River Estuary in Ba Ria-Vung Tau Province." This project seeks to improve the Government of Vietnam's (GVN) human and institutional capacity at the local and regional levels to plan for and respond to coastal and marine oil spills through technical assistance and study exchanges. From March 7-11, USAID, NOAA, and the U.S. Coast Guard conducted a five-day training workshop on Oil Spill Response and Shoreline Assessment in the Saigon River in Vung Tau City. STATE/USAID/NOAA support for Integrated Coastal Management (ICM) projects in Vietnam during 2002-2005 is approximately \$850,000. ICM projects in Vietnam have been successful and demonstrate great potential for further cooperation. Post strongly endorses a recent NOAA proposal to continue ICM activities in Vietnam. End Summary.

¶12. Since 2003, US-AEP and NOAA's Office of Response and Restoration have supported the project "Improved Oil Spill Contingency Planning in Saigon River in Ba Ria-Vung Tau Province." The primary GVN counterparts include PetroVietnam's Research Centre for Petroleum Development Safety and Environment (RDCPSE) and the Ba Ria-Vung Tau Province People's Committee. Other partners include port authorities of Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC) and Vung Tau City, oil spill response companies and relevant environmental agencies of HCMC, Dong Nai, Binh Thuan, and Ba Ria-Vung Tau Provinces.

¶13. The project seeks to improve the human and institutional capacity at local and regional levels to respond to and plan for coastal/marine oil spills. Activities have included study exchanges to the United States to learn about local, regional, and national oil spill response systems, stakeholder discussions on an oil spill contingency planning, technical training in the science of oil spills and shoreline assessment and development of Geographic Response Planning (GRP) maps for the Saigon River Estuary in Vung Tau Province.

¶14. From March 7-11, USAID, NOAA, and the U.S. Coast Guard conducted a five-day training workshop on Oil Spill Response and Shoreline Assessment in the Saigon River in Vung Tau City. The workshop was co-sponsored by the Ba Ria-Vung Tau Province People's Committee and PetroVietnam. The training focused on the science of oil spills, response planning at local, regional and national levels, and included a field trip/shoreline assessment of how to respond to oil spills at beach, mangrove, and mudflat habitats. Over thirty individuals from government agencies, port authorities and regional oil spill response teams from Vung Tau, HCMC, Dong Nai, Binh Thuan, Danang, and Hanoi participated in a tabletop oil spill emergency response drill. A final technical workshop focusing on development of a GRP map for Saigon River Estuary is planned for June 2005.

¶15. Over 10,000 vessels per year traverse the shipping lanes of the lower Saigon River, an area that supports aquaculture, tourism, and mangroves of the Can Gio UNESCO Man and Biosphere Reserve. Approximately six to eight significant oil spills occur every year in the Saigon River waterway, challenging local authorities and fisherfolk to improve response and remedies. With oil/gas development, tourism and fisheries topping the list of Vietnam's hard-currency earning sectors, the GVN has been keen to improve their oil spill response capacity considering the negative impact marine oil spills may have in the project area. In February 2005, Vietnamese news media reported that Deputy Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung requested the National Committee for Search and Rescue to expedite plans to establish three regional oil spill response centers for the northern, central, and southern regions of Vietnam.

PetroVietnam has been authorized to manage and operate the oil spill response center for the southern region, while a company owned by the Vietnamese Navy operates the oil spill response center for the central Vietnam region.

16. STATE/USAID/NOAA support during 2002-2005 is approximately USD 850,000, funding projects such as "Building Capacity for Integrated Coastal Management (ICM) in Tonkin Gulf", "Improved Oil Spill Contingency Planning in Saigon River" and "Establishing Pilot Marine Protected Area (MPA) Training and Certification Program in Vietnam." ICM Programs in Vietnam have been successful and demonstrate great potential for further cooperation. NOAA has recently submitted a proposal to continue ICM activities in Vietnam, which Post strongly endorses (Ref A).

MARINE